

Baker Building
1320 - 1322 F Street, N.W.
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-379

HABS,
DC,
WASH,
247-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

THE BAKER BUILDING

HABS No. DC-379

Location: 1320-1322 F Street, N.W., Square 254, Lot 49, Washington, D.C. HABS, DC, WASH, 247-

Present Owner: The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, 425 13th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004.

Present Occupant and Use: Vacant; to be demolished.

Significance: The site of the Baker Building forms part of the low scale commercial area north of Pennsylvania Avenue erected in Washington in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This building is one of three similar commercial structures designed by the local architectural firm of Marsh and Peter. The street facades display the firm's versatility of manipulating traditional architectural styles of the commercial vernacular which dominates F Street between 9th and 15th Streets. This building synthesizes classical elements with an essentially modern commercial design.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1926 (Building permit #7374, 3/13/26).
2. Architects: Marsh and Peter, D.C.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The property was originally owned by C.C. Willard. It has been maintained since 1940 by Walter C. Boyd (husband of Kate Willard Boyd, family of Caleb C. Willard) until the purchase by PADC in 1979.
4. Builder: Harry F. Boryer.
5. Original plans and construction. There are no original plans for the Baker Building. The original structure remains as built, except for minor alterations.
6. Alterations and additions: Much of the sheathing of stone panels on the recessed ground floor has been removed. The existing display windows are new, but appear to be in the same position as those original to the building (no building permits available). A rear addition, a four-story brick structure, has been physically and functionally integrated with the buildings adjacent to the north and east (no permit available).

B. Development of Site

By 1939, Lots 815, 823, 47, and 45, were combined to form Lot 48, a U-shaped lot surrounding Lot 48 (827), Beckers Leather Goods Store (HABS No. DC-376). Finally, in 1943, when Walter Willard

Boyd (husband of Kate Willard Boyd and descendant of Caleb Willard) took ownership of Lots 48 and 46, they were combined to form Lot 49.

According to the Baists map of 1919, the existing Baker Building replaced a previous Baker Building, which housed the Von Unschuld School of Music. The present Baker Building held the Reid Baker Photo Shop. The building later rented to Cartens Leather, Regal Shoes, and Raleighs (for personnel, display and advertising offices).

C. Bibliography

1. Primary Sources

District of Columbia, Building Permits, National Archives, D.C.
District of Columbia Deed Records. Recorder of Deeds, D.C.

2. Secondary Sources

All of the following are available at the Washingtoniana Division of the Martin Luther King, D.C. Public Library.

Baist Real Estate Atlas Collection.
D.C. City Directories, 1865-1979.
D.C. General Assessment Records.

Prepared by: Anderson, Notter/Mariani
Historic Preservation Consultants
for PADG.

Wendy Hunter
Architect for PADG
December, 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: This three-story retail and office building stands on F Street mid-way between Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets. It terminates a row of low structures to the east, and across a narrow alley to the west looms the large National Press Club Building. The building facade superimposes classical motifs on an essentially modern commercial structure. The facade contains two floors of large, full-bay office windows above ground floor shops. It is attached to a building in the rear of the lot.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This building is three-stories high with a basement. Rectangular in plan, it measures approximately 49' x 120'. The parapet height is 50' above F Street. The building is three bays wide and six bays deep.
2. Foundations: Concrete.
3. Wall construction, finish and color:
 - a. Facade: The recessed ground floor is sheathed with light colored stone panels. Much of this sheathing has been removed. Capitals are carved in relief on the panels above each pier. Each pier in turn, has laterally engaged pilasters which support an entablature. Resting on piers, a cornice line separates the stone-clad first floor from the brickwork above. At this line, piers become clad in brick and hence rise uninterrupted to the roof level, which consists of a deep brick and stone entablature whose frieze contains a series of stone medallions alternating with low horizontal attic vent grilles.
 - b. Rear building: This four-story rectangular, red brick building measures 45' x 35', and has a steel structure and flat roof.

Exposed facades on the west and south face service alleys. The south facade is the more detailed because of its elaborate brickwork and surface articulation. Its two structural bays are modulated by three projecting brick piers which ascend the building's full height. The transitions between the first and second floors, and the fourth and roof

levels are marked by wide corbel bands several brick courses high.

4. Structural system and framing: Steel frame.

5. Openings:

- a. Doors: The two main entrances are of steel and glass.
- b. Windows: 1) Facade: Full-bay floor to ceiling windows with subdivided side lights occur on the two upper floors. On the third floor, windows contain an additional row of horizontal transom lights at its top. The metal spandrels, between the second and third floors carry bracketed pediments and are flanked by fluted insets, thus giving classical ornamentation to the second level. The pediments on the side bays are segmental rather than triangular.

2) Rear building: Each bay has a large central opening at ground level, now partially bricked in, and two square-headed windows on each upper story.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape: Flat.
- b. Cornice: 1) Facade: A simple stone cornice surmounted by a small segmental parapet in stone at the center of the facade tops the building.

2) Rear building: The roof parapet terminates in two corbeled courses.

C. Description of the Interior

1. Floor Plans

- a. First Floor: The first floor consists of a small retail store on the east, longitudinal in plan, with a single run staircase along the store's west wall leading to the second floor. West of this space is a north-south corridor lined with offices. Two sets of stairs and an elevator are located at the rear of the building.

- b. Second and third floors: These floors are similar. The entire east bay is occupied by a dog-leg stair that serves all floors and the roof. The west bay consists of a single room accessible through the L-shaped corridor that connects the assemblage of alley structures.
2. Stairways: All stairs have metal risers, stringers, and newels, and incorporate decorative panels.
3. Flooring: Corridor floors are terrazzo, while wood flooring is found in office areas.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster walls hold simple molding at the floor line.
5. Openings: Office doors contain wood panels with glass inserts, and match the design of the partitions. Windows are framed with plain wood trim.

D. Site

This building is on the south side of F street, and faces north. Due to its proximity to Pennsylvania Avenue and the White House, F Street (between 9th Street and 15th Street) has been the center of Washington's commercial activity throughout its history. Today the street is composed of buildings in a variety of architectural styles dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries. F Street contains predominantly four to five story buildings with one or two ten to fourteen story buildings occurring on each block. In the 1300 block, three tall structures exist; the National Press Building, Bond's, and the American Building. The strong architectural cohesion of this block reflects the fact that most buildings were constructed within a ten-year period (1922-1932) and that the three buildings located at 1310-1322 F Street were designed by the same architectural firm, Marsh and Peter. All buildings on the block exhibit great care in architectural detailing and ornamentation, particularly at the street level. Such care and deliberation of design in this block of F Street has enhanced the pedestrian path and reduced the image of grand scale to that of human proportion.

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the completion of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Plan. John A. Burns, and Emily J. Harris were the HABS project coordinators. The records were prepared under the general supervision of Jeffrey S. Wolf, Architect with PADC. Historic data was compiled by PADC consultants in historic preservation, Anderson Notter/Mariani, and expended by Wendy Hunter, Architect with PADC. Documentary photographs were taken by Jeffrey S. Wolf in December 1979. The data was edited and prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress by Robert S. Lange, and architectural historian in the HABS office, in June 1980.